

December 18th, 2007

Contact: Robin Winchell (202) 225-4031

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D -LA) announced today that he had secured \$44,830,500 for projects in Louisiana's Third Congressional District in the 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2764). The Omnibus passed the House last night with a strong bipartisan support and should be considered by the Senate for approval in the next few days.

"South Louisianians will have an even merrier Christmas knowing that so many important projects will be getting a much-needed boost from federal funding," Rep. Melancon said.

"The new Congress has worked hard to reign in federal spending and, this year, has cut Congressional earmarks by over 40%. Fortunately, leadership in Congress recognized the south Louisiana projects we advocated for are needs - not wants - and spared them from the chopping block."

\$1,316,000 for St. Bernard Health Center in Chalmette, LA

Rep. Melancon requested this funding to assist with the development of a permanent, 40-bed healthcare facility in St. Bernard Parish. After Hurricane Katrina destroyed St. Bernard Parish's only hospital, local doctors and healthcare workers opened the St. Bernard Health Center to provide basic healthcare to the people of the parish. Since the storm, this temporary clinic has been housed in a series of trailers located next to the WalMart SuperCenter on W. Judge Perez Drive and provides primary care for residents of the parish.

"Since Katrina and Rita devastated south Louisiana, the health care workers and administrators at the St. Bernard Health Center have worked valiantly to fill the healthcare void left in their community," Rep. Melancon said. **"I am pleased they will be receiving more support from the federal government for their efforts, and will continue to work in Congress for more funding to stand up health care in south Louisiana."**

St. Bernard Health Center's Administrator, Brian Barbeito, thanked Rep. Melancon for his assistance in securing this funding for the clinic. Mr. Barbeito commented, **"As the nation is well aware, the community of St. Bernard Parish was devastated by Hurricane Katrina,**

leaving this thriving community with zero healthcare coverage. The \$1.3 million Rep. Melancon has worked diligently to secure for St. Bernard Parish allows for the building of better healthcare facilities and the purchase power of the best equipment. Without the \$1.3 million, both the facility parameters and equipment options are restricted. I cannot express enough gratitude to our Congressman for keeping his constituents' need at the forefront of our nation."

Rep. Melancon has worked to bring Congressional attention to the desperate state of health care in south Louisiana following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In August, Rep. Melancon brought a delegation of 14 members of Congress, including Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Majority Whip James Clyburn, to tour the St. Bernard Health Center. The delegation met with doctors, nurses, patients and administrators to discuss the clinic's role in providing healthcare to the parish since the 2005 storms and highlight the need for additional federal funding to support its services. *Additional background information on Rep. Melancon's support for the St. Bernard Health Center can be found at the bottom of this release.*

Rep. Melancon also secured the following funding in the final Omnibus Appropriations bill for projects in south Louisiana:

Water Projects

\$12,500,000 for maintenance and dredging of the Atchafalaya Basin. This funding is needed for critical maintenance of the basin, as well as for construction materials necessary to provide adequately sustainable all-weather surfacing for Atchafalaya Basin levee crown roads.

\$11,400,000 for maintenance and dredging of the Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf and Black. Dredging the channels of the Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf and Black will support operations at the Port of Morgan City and the Port of West St. Mary.

\$4,000,000 for Morganza to the Gulf. For planning, engineering, design and construction

of Reach J-1 of the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection System.

\$3,040,000 for maintenance and dredging of the Houma Navigation Canal. This funding will be used to maintain and dredge the channel. Dredge material is planned to be used in a beneficial manner to create marsh in open water areas adjacent to the Houma Navigation Canal. The project will also include construction of spoil retention levees and rock armor of the banks for retention of the material and erosion prevention for this dredging project and future dredging.

\$1,068,000 for dredging of Mississippi River outlets at Venice (Plaquemines Parish).

\$980,000 for Larose to Golden Meadow Levees. This funding will be used toward completion of the Larose to Golden Meadow hurricane protection project.

\$698,000 for dredging of Empire to the Gulf waterway (Plaquemines Parish).

\$154,000 to monitor Bayou Teche and the Vermillion River to ensure navigability.

Agriculture

\$1,883,000 for ARS Research Lab Construction (Houma). This funding will go toward construction of additional facilities at the Agriculture Research Service Sugarcane Research Laboratory's farm near Houma.

\$1,530,000 for Phytoestrogen Research. For collaborative research between CBR and USDA Southern Regional Research Center to study the dietary effects and benefits of soy products, particularly in preventing certain diseases such as breast cancer.

\$1,193,000 for Research and Development of High Yield Sugarcane. This funding will assist the Agriculture Research Service Lab near Houma with research in optimizing sugarcane yields.

Transportation

\$500,000 for lane improvements to LA 675 in Iberia Parish. This appropriation will begin funding a project to expand LA 675 from two lanes to five.

\$250,000 for improvements to LA-42 in Ascension Parish.

\$150,000 for Multi-use Conference and Emergency Operations Center in New Iberia. This appropriation will help fund the planning, design, and construction of a multi-use Conference and Emergency Operations Center for the City of New Iberia, Iberia Parish, and surrounding areas.

▯ Health Care

\$429,000 for St. James Parish Hospital in Litcher. This funding will be used by the hospital to purchase a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine to better detect and treat patients in an area with higher than normal cancer rates.

Commerce, Justice and Science

\$446,500 for research linking NASA with Louisiana businesses and research programs. This funding will support ongoing applied polymer technology research and development at Tulane University that links NASA with Louisiana's polymer industry and the state's academic polymer research programs.

\$672,100 for Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office. This funding will assist the sheriff's department with purchasing integrated in-car mobile technology. By acquiring integrated systems, the sheriff's office will not only enhance its day-to-day operations, but will be better prepared to respond and investigate others types of critical incidents related to homeland defense and emergency response.

\$220,900 for the Thibodaux Police Department. This funding will assist the City of Thibodaux with expanding the city's video surveillance system and equip the city's mobile command unit with state-of-the-art data and interoperable communications equipment.

Defense - Signed into Law

\$2,400,000 for Four Navy Dive Boats to Be Built at Geo Shipyard in New Iberia. In the Defense Appropriations bill signed into law earlier this year, Rep. Melancon secured \$2.4 million for a Navy project to procure four dive boats to be built at Geo Shipyard in New Iberia. Currently, the Navy uses a collection of landing craft and small boats for underwater maintenance and repair of Navy equipment, but these vessels were not originally intended for underwater husbandry and dive boat operations. Additionally, many of the current boats are approaching 50 years old. According to Geo Shipyard, maintenance costs of these out-dated vessels are extremely high. While the outdated dive boats are out for repairs, larger ships in need of maintenance have to dry dock, increasing overall maintenance cost of the Navy fleet. The out-dated fleet also does not provide the technology necessary to safely and efficiently execute its mission nor do they meet the operational requirements for ship husbandry. Therefore, the Navy sought 35 new boats to update its dive boat fleet.

Rep. Melancon concluded, "I am proud to have secured this federal funding for health centers, water projects, agriculture research, and other investments in south Louisiana's future, and I will continue to work in Washington to bring our tax dollars back to the people of the Third Congressional District."

Additional Background on Rep. Melancon's Efforts to Support St. Bernard Health

Center

At Rep. Melancon's urging, the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee - which Rep. Melancon vice chairs - held a hearing last March on post-storm health care conditions and heard directly from health care providers and administrators in south Louisiana. Dr. Bryan Bertucci, a family physician at the St. Bernard Health Center and the Coroner of St. Bernard Parish, testified before the subcommittee about healthcare conditions in the parish (read his testimony here: http://energycommerce.house.gov/cmte_mtgs/110-oi-hrg.031307.Bertucci-Testimony.pdf). Dr. Bertucci also met with the Congressional Delegation during their August visit.

Following the March hearing, and as a result of ongoing pressure from the Committee, in May the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced it would release almost \$200 million to the Gulf Coast for primary care healthcare services. \$100 million is dedicated to expanding access to primary care in the Greater New Orleans area. In the first round of grant distributions announced in September, the St. Bernard Health Center received \$719,849 in federal funding.